

REMARKS

The Office Action of July 27, 2005 has been carefully reviewed and these remarks are responsive thereto. Reconsideration and allowance of the instant application are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-27, 29-30, and 32-33 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Simonetti (U.S. Patent 5,295,261).

In accordance with the present claims, a database is created on a customer-by-customer basis. Thus, it is possible to conduct transactions to *individually suit* each customer's intentions or needs. The system can automatically allocate distributors and suppliers to each customer and desired product without the assistance of the customers. In addition, even when the same product offered by a plurality of suppliers is ordered from several customers at the same time, the system allows selection of an appropriate supplier for *each* customer.

Simonetti is directed to a database structure having informational and navigational fields. Simonetti does not relate to distribution support equipment configured with a computer system, customer-side equipment, distributor-side equipment, and supplier-side equipment as claimed. That is, Simonetti is directed to a database structure, which solves problems completely different from that of the present invention.

More specifically, Simonetti does not select merchandise distribution routes based on particular products and customers. Instead, a distribution center is selected based on the customer's address. That is, a customer places an order and the order is filled at a pre-designated distribution center. If the distribution center doesn't contain the desired merchandise, another distribution center is selected.

Simonetti does not teach separating merchandise distribution routes from one another and identifying particular merchandise distribution route ideal for the customer and merchandise ordered by the customer. In other words, Simonetti does not allow selection of the merchandise distribution routes according to preference or convenience of the individual customer. Attention is drawn to line 59, column 5 through column 6 in Simonetti.

Simonetti is different from the instant claims wherein the merchandise distribution routes are determined by selection of the distributors and suppliers, not by the customer's address. Specifically, in claim 1, "a database storing registered customer IDs, distributors, suppliers, and respective *merchandise distribution routes through which each of plural sorts of merchandise ordered by each of the customers is delivered* to the customer; the merchandise distribution routes *being determined by* the distributors and suppliers selected." That is, the route selected is based on the selection of the distributors and suppliers – not on a predetermined distribution center based on the customer's address.

In addition, claim 1 recites "route specifying means for specifying each of the merchandise distribution routes for the plural sorts of merchandise by accessing the database and then separating one route from another upon receipt of order signals from the customer specified by the customer specifying means to deliver the plural sorts of merchandise to the customer; *the route specifying means automatically identifying respective merchandise distribution routes, upon receipt of orders from customers, based on the customer and the product.*"

Thus the merchandise distribution routes are determined by the distributors and suppliers selected, and the route specifying means automatically identify respective merchandise distribution routes based on the customer and the product. Based on the claim language, the distributors and suppliers are linked to the customer and the product.

Customer ID	→	Merchandise	→	Merchandise distribution route
		(merchandise to be purchased by customer identified by the customer ID)		(dealer, wholesaler, supplier)

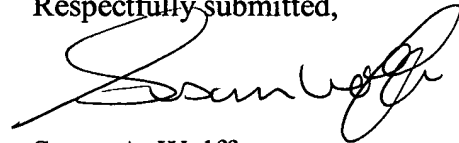
Moreover, the present invention provides ordering means for automatically placing orders with both suppliers and dealers on the selected merchandise distribution route. This can eliminate double work such that the suppliers (or dealers) receiving an order from the customer should retransmit the order to the dealers (or suppliers). Simonetti does not disclose or suggest this feature.

Withdrawal of the instant rejections is requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, withdrawal of the rejections and issuance of a Notice of Allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Wolffe", written over the typed name.

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